

Message Text

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PAGE 01 COTONO 00920 261310Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----270134Z 054630 /63
R 261100Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9726

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 0920

EXDIS

FOR ASST SECRETARY SCHAUFLE FROM CHARGE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, DM, US
SUBJ: ABSTENTION IN IDA VOTE ON LOANS TO BENIN

REF: A. STATE 117008 B. STATE 109281

1. WHILE I UNDERSTAND THE URGENCY OF AND FULLY SUPPORT THE ADMINISTRATION'S COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIHTS, I AM DISTURBED THAT THE EMBASSY WAS NOT CONSULTED OR ALLOWED TO MAKE ANY CONTRIBUTION TO THE DECISION TO ABSTAIN ON THE VOTE FOR DEVELOPMENT LOANS TO BENIN IN THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (IDA). IN REF A, WHICH WAS RECEIVED ONE DAY BEFORE DEMARCHE WAS TO BE MADE, WE WERE FACED WITH A FAIT ACCOMPLI WHICH TOOK US AS MUCH BY SURPRISE AS IT DID THE BENINESE SINCE THE SPECIFIC REASONS WERE NOT CLEAR. THE ONLY PREVIOUS MENTION OF THE IDA LOANS WAS IN REF B, WHICH REPORTED DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY SEELY'S MAY 12 DISCUSSION WITH BENIN'S AMBASSADOR BOYA. IN THAT TELEGRAM HUMAN RIGHTS WERE RAISED ALONG WITH THE ARBITRARY ARREST AND DETENTION OF A UNITED STATES CITIZEN (A CONSULAR MORE THAN A HUMAN RIGHTS CASE), AND THE QUESTION OF TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS WITHIN BENIN. DEPUTY ASST SECRETARY SEELYE POINTED OUT TO AMB BOYA THE FACT THAT THE US HAD ABSTAINED ON VOTE FOR ETHIOPIA IN IDA AND HAD NOTED THAT BENIN HAD SIMILAR

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LOANS DUE TO COME TO A VOTE SHORTLY. WE WERE NOT AWARE FROM THIS CABLE THAT WE HAD DECIDED TO ABSTAIN ON THE VOTE.

2. ALTHOUGH BENIN'S RECORD ON HUMAN RIGHTS IS FAR FROM LAUDABLE, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO DOCUMENT LARGE NUMBERS OF POLITICAL ARRESTS NOT CONNECTED WITH THE JANUARY 16, 1977 MERCENARY ATTACK. SIMILARLY, WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE OF TORTURE

OF PRISONERS EVEN DURING THE PERIOD OF GREATEST GOVERNMENT
IRRATIONALITY IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE MERCENARY ATTACK. THE
PICTURE OF CONDITIONS IN BENIN AS SEEN FROM THE OUTSIDE IS
MUCH MORE GRIM THAN THE REALITY. CONDITIONS ARE CERTAINLY NOT
AGREEABLE YET IN NO WAY ARE THEY AT THE PRESENT TIME COMPARABLE
TO THE SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA.

3. I BELIEVE THAT BENIN SHOULD INDEED BE TAKEN TO TASK FOR ITS
VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS BUT I THINK THE TIMING AND THE
NATURE OF THE MEASURES INVOLVED WILL GREATLY DETERMINE WHETHER
OUR ACTIONS WILL HAVE THE DESIRED OR THE OPPOSITE EFFECT. EVEN
IF OUR VIEWS ON THE SUBJECT WERE REJECTED WE WOULD AT LEAST
HAVE APPRECIATED THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE OUR VOICE HEARD.
THOMPSON

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Message Attributes

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